

Herbert Spencer Encyclopedia Article

Herbert Spencer

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Herbert Spencer

1820-1903

English philosopher, psychologist, and sociologist who synthesized the social and natural sciences into the framework of nineteenth-century evolutionary thought. By asserting the relationship between progress and science, Spencer posited the progressive aspects of evolution and coined the term "survival of the fittest." He had a low standing among scientific specialists, but was well respected by scientific innovators such as Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, and Alfred Wallace. Spencer's work had only moderate influence in Europe, but it was widely accepted in the United States.